

# ACCESS AMERICA

## U.S. Embassies To Show Works of Five American Indian Artists

*Donated prints will spur understanding of contemporary American Indian art.*



*First lady Laura Bush and artist Larry McNeil in front of his lithograph *First Light, Winter Solstice* (State Dept./Mark Stewart)*

Washington -- The works of five prominent American Indian artists soon will be on display at U.S. embassies worldwide, introducing foreign audiences to the richness and variety of contemporary American Indian art.

Norman Akers (of the Osage tribe), Mario Martinez (Yaqui), Larry McNeil (Tlingit), Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Flathead Salish) and Marie Watt (Seneca) -- artists who often utilize traditional American Indians motifs in unexpected ways --

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were selected by the U.S. State Department and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian to have their work showcased overseas.

The embassy-bound artworks, which were commissioned for the State Department's ART in Embassies program, were unveiled in Washington at a November 14 reception attended by the artists, first lady Laura Bush and other dignitaries.

Through the ART in Embassies Program, thousands of American artists, galleries and museums have lent paintings, sculptures and other original works of art for exhibition in U.S. ambassadorial residences.

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### FROM THE AMBASSADOR

Pilgrims--the first immigrants from Europe to the "New World"--encountered a new land full of flora and fauna unlike any they had seen before. Each November, on Thanksgiving Day, we eat the foods Native Americans shared with the Pilgrims--turkey, corn, beans and potatoes--reminding us of the important contribution they made and continue to make, to our American heritage.

In his declaration this month marking the beginning of American Indian Heritage Month, President George W. Bush reminded us that "American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to shape our Nation by preserving the heritage of their ancestors and by contributing to the rich diversity that is our country's strength." Today, while we continue to build our nation, we celebrate that diversity, a value that has become a hallmark of our young democracy.

—Robert F. Godec

## From the IRC

Visit the IRC to consult these books and films on American Indian heritage, or follow the links to online resources:

### Books

*American Indian myths & legends*  
R. Erdoes & A. Ortiz, editors

*The white man's Indian : Images of the American Indian, from Columbus to the present*  
Berkhofer, Robert F.

*To show heart : Native American self-determination & federal Indian policy, 1960-1975*  
Castile , George Pierre

*The sky clears: Poetry of the American Indians*  
Day, A. Grove

*American Indians, time, and the law : Native societies in a modern constitutional democracy*  
Wilkinson, Charles F.

### Films

"Charles Loloma" 1976

"Fight No More Forever" 1975

"The Nations of the Northeast: The Strength and Wisdom of the Confederacies" 1994

### Links

#### [Nativewiki](#)

A resource for resources on indigenous cultures worldwide

#### [Native Culture Links](#)


Resources about Native Americans

#### [Smithsonian Institution](#)

An SI site on American Indian History and Culture

— Khaled Ben Bhoudid  
& the IRC team.

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All five artists explained how they approach their work. "For many Native Americans, the experience of modern life creates a kaleidoscope of differing realities ... where the boundaries of self and culture can be clearly defined or not so clear; where the past and present, tribal and Western cultures coexist," said Akers. "My art mediates this experience for me: an experience that many Native people deal with." 

*More information on the ART in Embassies Program is available at <http://aiep.state.gov>.*

*Excerpted from a November 17, 2007 article by USINFO Staff Writer Lauren Monsen.*

*Read the complete text at <http://usinfo.state.gov>*

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*Since the late 19th century, powwows bringing together American Indians from different tribes to dance, sing and share traditions have been a significant social and cultural force in the lives of the indigenous people of North America. The dancer above performed at the National Powwow, a biennial event in Washington, held this year from August 10-12, that attracts members of some 250 tribal nations from the United States and Canada.*

*Above, Rylan Baker (Hidatsa/Cree) dazzles the crowd as he executes a maneuver from the physically demanding Men's Fancy Dance. (Ken White/State Dept.)*

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### Meriem Agrebi

**MEPI Undergraduate  
Institute on Leadership &  
American Studies**

#### Home in the United States

Newark, Delaware

#### Home in Tunisia

Bizerte

#### Fondest memory of the U.S.

My best memories are in the means of transport. I remember a bunch of MEPI kids (our professor, Dr. Green used to call us that) at the airplane eating, sleeping, making noise, laughing and having fun together, things that I missed a lot when returning to my country alone, without them.

#### Briefly describe your experience

It was a special time between two ordinary moments, Brian and Alice waiting for me at the airport with a UD (University of Delaware) sign on July 5th and Brian kissing me goodbye on August 19th at the same place, the airport. We were 21 students aged between 19 and 23 years old from all over the MENA region who had lot of fun while learning from and with each other.

We stayed mainly in Newark which had become our second home and which I miss a lot. We used to walk for 15 minutes to where we had lectures on several subjects such as American government and foreign policy, immigration in America, entrepreneurship, communication and public speaking, freedom of speech and religion in America, conflict resolution, media, community service and many others as well as leadership workshops.



What was interesting is that in addition to studying, we did lot of traveling and we saw different aspects of the life in the States: cosmopolitan New York, musical Memphis, western Colorado, historical Philadelphia, and political DC. We also went to New Jersey and we tried the beach atmosphere at Lewes in southern Delaware.

The volunteer work was also part of our program, activities followed by a huge feeling of accomplishment. We helped Habitat for Humanity during an afternoon, and we had lot of fun doing it. We had the special opportunity to go to the Mary Campbell Center for Disabled Persons, attending a show by them and on top of that sharing a unique moment talking to them. We also helped in cleaning the historic Fort Delaware.

We had the strange feeling of

being there for ages and it's because our days were so filled with many interesting things.

#### Lessons learned

It goes without saying that it was the best experience ever, the most interesting and the most enriching one for me. And saying how it is affecting my whole life in just few sentences is kind of unfair because every single day that I spent there brought something new to my understanding of my world.

What I keep saying is that what I've really learnt from being there rather than staying in my country is that in spite of all the participants being from Arab countries, we are totally different, with multiple historical, socioeconomic and political backgrounds. All that leads us to be curious, try to

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## DID YOU KNOW?



Census 2000 showed that 4.1 million Americans, or 1.5 percent, describe themselves as American Indians and Alaska Natives. This number includes 2.5 million people who report only American Indian and Alaska Native in addition to 1.6 million people, who also report one or more other races.





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understand each other, break stereotypes and cultivate acceptance and tolerance among ourselves but also toward others. This new dimension that wasn't evident without traveling and discussing many things and issues with people who don't share necessarily our point of view. And it was one of the things that pushed me to have a critical mind and to think outside the box.

The program gave me the opportunity not only to learn but also to do it with great pleasure, relying on myself, being self aware and looking for the leader who is inside of me and who makes me believe in myself and aim high.

I learned to laugh, laugh from the bottom of my heart. To love, and to give.


And what was so special about the program is that it taught me to love my country, to be proud of it, of the centuries of history, of the struggle of its people, of its culture and folklore and to look at all this from a new perspective, with curious eyes.

#### **Advice for others**

Try to say what you really think, ask, be curious, and take the initiative of going to people and hearing from them, things that I didn't totally implement because of my shyness, but its part of the retroactive effects of the program that you'll have the chance to notice by yourself once back to your country because you'll never be the same person. If you are homesick and feeling lonely take some time to think about your experience, about what you are living and how lucky you are and then you'll see that all that you should do is to take advantage of every moment left because you'll miss everything about it.

#### **What I miss most**

Hugs and smiling faces. I found Americans very friendly, always smiling, always offering to help you, curious, wanting to hear from you, where you are from, how it looks like, how life is there and overall make you feel like really sharing with their 'wow' when you begin your sentence with 'I'm from Tunisia'.

I also miss the Starbucks' caramel frappuccino and Grotto's pizza. Miam miam...! 

## **Calendar**

### **Free English Conversation**

#### **Every Thursday**

American Corner at AMIDEAST  
1:00 PM

*Weekly discussions on topics from films and music to religion. Topics are posted weekly in the American Corner and at AMIDEAST.*

### **Study in the USA Consultations**

#### **Every Tuesday-Friday**

AMIDEAST Advising Resource Library  
9:00 AM-4:00 PM

*Browse materials from U.S. universities consult resources on applications and scholarships.*

### **Open Access**

#### **Every Monday-Friday**

American Corner at AMIDEAST  
10:00 AM-6:00 PM

*Peruse books and magazines in English on topics from history to pop culture and more.*

American Corner at AMIDEAST  
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